

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Following entry of this amendment, claims 1-6, 8-13, 27, 28, 34, and 41-43 will be pending. Claims 1 and 34 are amended herein and claim 37 is cancelled.

In the October 16, 2003 Office Action, claims 27, 28, and 41-43 were allowed. Claims 3 and 8 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten.

In paragraph 1 of the October 16, 2003 Office Action, claims 34 and 37 were objected to for insufficient antecedent basis. Claim 37 has been cancelled and claim 34 has been amended to correct this informality.

The rejection stated in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the October 16, 2003 Office Action is moot because claim 37 has been cancelled.

Paragraphs 4-5 of the October 16, 2003 Office Action rejected claims 1, 9, 10, and 37 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by the admitted prior art (including Figures 3-5 of the present application and U.S. Patent 5,870,420). Claim 1 has been amended to specify that the flange, which supports the adjacent hubs of the first and second blower sections, does not extend beyond an outlet area of the blower sections so that the gas flow through the two blower sections can combine. This is distinguished from the prior art shown in Figures 4 and 5, which has a flange 201 that extends beyond the outlet area of the blower sections, which keeps the gas flow from mixing together. As explained at pages 3-4 of the present application, such inhomogeneous flow of the laser gas lowers the productivity of the laser. Claims 9 and 10 are allowable for the same reasons as claim 1. Claim 37 has been cancelled.

Paragraph 6 of the October 16, 2003 Office Action rejected claims 34 and 37 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,760,581 (Hoag). Claim 34 has been amended to clarify that the electrode support bar extends substantially the entire length of the electrode that it supports. This distinguishes over the "short segment between 19D and part #55," which is identified at page 5 of the Office Action as the "electrode support bar" in Hoag. Claim 34 is intended to cover a different structure, one where the electrode support bar supports substantially the whole length of an electrode, and where the support flange extends to the electrode support bar.

Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the October 16, 2003 Office Action rejected claims 1, 2, 4-6, 11, and 12 under 35 USC 103 as obvious over Hoag in view of U.S. Patent 6,195,378 (Hoffman).

Claim 1, and claims 2, 4-6, 11, and 12, which are dependent on claim 1, distinguish over Hoag for substantially the same reasons discussed above concerning the §102 rejection of claim 1. There is no disclosure in Hoag that the flange 65b does not extend beyond an outlet area of the blower sections so that the gas flow through the two blower sections can combine, as claimed in amended claim 1.

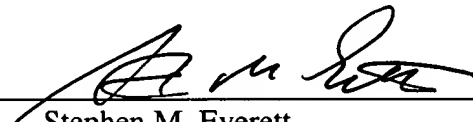
Paragraph 9 of the October 16, 2003 Office Action rejected claim 13 under 35 USC 103 as obvious over Hoag in view of Hoffman and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,250,886 (Immell). Claim 13 depends from claim 1, which distinguishes over Hoag for the reasons set forth above.

Thus, for the reasons discussed above, Applicant believes that the present application is now in form for allowance, and action to that end is requested. If the examiner believes that a telephone interview would be helpful, the undersigned can be reached at 415-512-1312, x109.

Respectfully submitted,

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